Discussion on the Trinity of Civilian space and Nuclear Technology with USA

992. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and U.S. discussed the trinity of civilian space and nuclear technology on the 6th January, 2003;

(b) if so, whether facilitation of dual purpose hi-tech trade was also discussed;

(c) if so, whether North Korea and cross-border terrorism was also discussed; and

(d) if so, the outcome of the discussion with salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes.

(d) Discussions with Dr. Richard Haass, Director (Policy Planning) in the U.S. Department of State, on 6 January 2003 in Delhi were part of the process of regular consultations between India and the United States to strengthen bilateral cooperation and enhance mutual understanding on regional and international issues. The two sides have made progress on trinity issues, which includes a Statement of Principles governing bilateral high technology commerce, including trade in 'dual use' goods and technologies, signed on 5 February 2003 in Washington D.C. The United States acknowledges that cross-border terrorism continues and Pakistan must fulfil its commitment to end it. Government has also registered with the United States its deep concern at the reports of clandestine transfer of nuclear technology from Pakistan to North Korea.

Meeting of RPOs to streamline the Passport System

993. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether to streamline the passport system a meeting of the regional passport officers was held in New Delhi in the month of January, 2003;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether the existing loopholes/bottlenecks in issuance of passports would be checked thoroughly; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. A meeting of Passport Officers was held at New Delhi from Jan. 27-29,2003.

(b) During the meeting, the major issues that were discussed related to improving the system of issuance of passports.

(c) and (d) The Government is checking the existing loopholes/ bottlenecks by making the process of issuance of passports more efficient and transparent through computerization and decentralization of the passport issuance system. In particular, the computerization of records and machine printing of passports will ensure greater security and will make forgery of passports extremely difficult.

Joint Press Conference of Iranian President with Pakistan President

994. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Iranian President, while replying to questions at a joint press conference with Pakistani Prime Minister at Islamabad laid down the blueprint of his visit to India during January 2003;

(b) if so, whether the issues relating to Iran-India gas pipeline was the dominated factor discussed;

(c) if so, what were the other agenda;

(d) the outcome of the discussions held;

(e) whether the Iranian President urged India to initiate talks with Pakistan and also back Pakistan's nuclear programme; and

(f) whether India has clearly mentioned that no talks would be held unless and until Pakistan stops infiltration into India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) In Iranian President's joint press conference with Pakistan's Prime Minister during his visit to Pakistan from 23-25 December, 2002, there were questions posed relating to India and India-Iran relations, but details of the visit to India in January 2003 were not elaborated upon.